

Introduction

to

Titanic Tragedy

The First S. O. S.

The following is an interpretive reading programme in the form of a synopsis on the subject of the sinking of the White Star Line , Royal Mail Vessel Titanic on the 15th April, 1912, after colliding with an ice berg in the Atlantic ocean.

It was first presented on the 15th April, 2010 at a meeting of the Kawana Branch of Toastmasters International and is substantially the exact wording spoken by witnesses at the British Marine Court of Inquiry which was commenced on the 2nd May, 1912.

Producer of the Programme
Wiera Nolan AC-B CL
Toastmaster International

Preamble A Night to Remember by Walter Lord

The Bridge R.Hitchens quarter master

The Wireless Room H.Bride 2nd Radio Officer

The Engine Room No witness survived

Postscript a summary of facts

The Engine Room story is told by Jack Nolan an ex chief engineer
with in excess of thirty years sea going experience.
He is also a 2nd cousin to the Chief Radio Officer
Jack Phillips who did not survive the sinking.

Reader 1.

Preamble to the Titanic Story

High in the crow's nest of the new White Star Liner, the Royal Mail Ship Titanic, the lookout Fredrick Fleet peered into the night, it was calm, clear and bitterly cold. There was no moon but the cloudless sky blazed with stars. The Atlantic was like polished glass.

This was the fifth night of the Titanic's maiden voyage to New York. Fredrick Fleet was one of six lookouts carried on the Titanic, he had been warned to watch out especially for ice bergs. His watch was almost over, it was 11.40 pm on Sunday 14th of April, 1912.

Suddenly Fleet saw something directly ahead. He rang the crow's nest bell three times, the warning of danger ahead. At the same time he lifted the phone and rang the bridge.

The Bridge

As told by R.Hitchens a quatermaster to the marine Court of Enquiry.

"What did you see", asked a calm voice at the other end of the phone.

"Ice berg ahead", replied Fleet

"Thank you", acknowledged the voice with detached courtesy.

On the bridge First Officer Murdock ordered **"hard a'port, engines full astern"**

As officer Murdock's hand was on the telegraph handle to stop the engines the crash came, he then remotely closed all water tight doors.

In seconds Captain Smith, Commander of the Titanic was by his side.

"Mr. Murdock what was that?"

"An ice berg Sir"

"Close the emergency doors"

"They are already closed, sir", said Murdock

Captain Smith's next order from the bridge was, **"Send for the carpenter and tell him to sound the ship"**. The message was sent, but he never came up to report. He was probably already below and was never seen again.

Before ordering **"All passengers with life jackets on deck"** Captain Smith went to the wireless room, he ascertained by this time that the damage to the Titanic was very grave and that in spite of her water tight compartments she was filling rapidly.

There was but one thing to do: To call for help with the hope that the appeal might be heard and answered by ships within reach of those wireless words..

Never before had Captain Smith sent such a message out into the darkness, but now he must make use of that modern miracle invented by Marconi, by which ships may speak across the great silence of the sea.

The Titanic was sinking by the head, water was rising in her great hold and flooding into adjacent compartments. If there was to be rescue, it must come quickly. The greatest hope of help, if there was any hope clinging to, lay in the wireless cabin.

Let us now go to the wireless room and continue the story as told to the British Marine Court of Inquiry by Harold Bride the second Radio Officer.

Reader 2.

The Wireless Room as told by Harold Bride 2nd Radio Officer

There were three rooms in the wireless cabin, one was for sleeping, one the dynamo room and the other the operating room.

The night of the accident I was not sending but asleep.

Suddenly I was conscious of waking up and hearing Phillips sending to Cape Race.

I read what he send; it was traffic matter.

I remembered how tired he was, and got out of bed without putting my uniform on to relieve him.

I did not even feel a shock. I hardly knew anything had happened

I was standing by Phillips telling him to go to bed when the captain put his head in the cabin.

"We struck an iceberg, he said

"and I'm having an inspection made to tell what it has done to us".

"You better get ready to send out a call for assistance; but don't send it until I tell you".

The Captain told us we were struck amidship or just back amidship

The captain went away, but in a few minutes he came back.

We could hear some confusion outside, but there was nothing to indicate there was any trouble.

The wireless was working perfectly.

"Send a call for assistance at once; ordered the captain, barely putting his head in the door.

"What call should I send? Sir" Phillips asked.

"The regulation international call for help, just that.

The captain was gone. Phillips began to send the C.Q.D.

Again and again the signal rasped into the cold blue Atlantic night.

He flashed away at it. We joked, making light of it while he flashed the signal for five minutes.

Then the captain came back.

"What are you sending"? He asked.

"C.Q.D". Phillips replied.- at that time the international signal of distress

I cut in: **"send S.O.S. its the new call. It may be our last chance."**

Phillips changed the signal to S.O.S..

In the next few minutes we picked up the first steamship, the Frankfurt. We gave her our position, and said we have struck an iceberg and needed assistance..

The Frankfurt's operator went away to tell his captain.

When he come back, we told him we were sinking by the head.

By that time we could observe a distinct list forward.

Then the Carpathia answered our signal, we told her we were sinking, & were told the Carpathia was putting about and heading for us.

Our Captain had left us by that time and Phillips told me :

"run and tell him the Carpathia has answered us"

When I came back, I heard Phillips giving the Carpathia fuller directions. Phillips told me - **“go & put your uniform on”.**

Until that moment I had forgotten I was not dressed properly

I went to my cabin, got dressed.

I brought an overcoat for Phillips; it was very cold and I slipped the coat upon him while he worked.

Every few minutes Phillips would sent me to the captain with messages, merely telling how the Carpathia was coming our way and giving her speed.

I noticed as I came back from one trip that they were putting off the women and children in life boats.

I noticed the list forward was increasing.

Phillips told me the wireless was growing weaker, and the Captain came in and informed us that our engine room was taking in water; and the dynamos might not last much longer.

We sent those facts to the “Carpathia”.

I went out on deck & looked around. The water was close up to the boat deck.

There was a great scramble aft,

how poor Phillips worked through it I don't know.

“He was a brave man. I learned to love him that night, for I suddenly felt for him a great reverence, seeing him standing there sticking to his work while every body else was raging about.”

I will never forget the work of Phillips in the last awful fifeteen minutes.

I thought it was about time to look about and see if there was anything detached that would float.

I remembered that my lifebelt was under the bunk and went and got it.

Then I thought how cold the water was and I put my boots and an extra jacket on.

I saw Phillips standing out there still sending away, giving the Carapthia details how we were doing.

We picked up the Olympic and told her we were sinking by the head.

“We are well down by the head!”

As Phillips was sending that message I strapped his lifebelt to his back.

I had already put on his overcoat, and wondered if I could get him into his boots.

He suggested that I should look out and see if all the people were off in the boats or, if any boats were left.

I saw a collapsible boat near the funnel and went over to it.

Twelve men were trying to boost it down to the boat deck. They were having an awful time. It was the last boat left.. I looked at it longingly for a few minutes, then I gave them a hand.

Over she went and they all started to scramble in.

I walked back to Phillips and said: **“the last raft is gone.”**

It was 2.05 when Captain Smith entered the wireless cabin for the last time.

“Men you have done your duty. You can do no more.

Abandon your stations. Now it's every man for himself..”

Phillips looked up for a second, then bend over the set once more.
Captain Smith tried once again.” **You look out for yourselves”...** then he added softly....

“I release you – that's the way of it at this kind of time, every man for himself.”

I looked out.. the boat deck was awash. Phillips was sending.. sending..
The water was coming in into our cabin while he worked.

Something happened now that I hate to tell.
I was back in our cabin getting Phillip's money for him.
As I looked out of the door I saw a stoker leaning over Phillips from behind.
Phillips was too busy to notice what the man was doing.

The stoker was slipping the life belt of Phillip's back..

He was a big man, and as you can see I am small.
I don't know what it was what I got hold of.
I remembered in a flash the way Phillips had clung on, sending, sending. How I had to fix that lifebelt in place because he was too busy to do it.
I knew the man from below had his own lifebelt.
I suddenly felt a passion not to let the man die a decent sailors death.
I wished he might have stretched a ropeor walked the plank..
I did my duty.... I hope I finished him; I don't know.
We left him on the cabin floor of the wireless room, and he wasn't moving.

From aft came the tunes of the band, loud and clear sounded the hymn of faith -
“Nearer my God to thee...”

Phillips ran aft and that was the last I saw of him.

Reader 3

The Engine Room

The tragedy of the Titanic is told by the surviving passengers and crew, but the story cannot be complete unless what occurred in the engine rooms and boiler rooms is told. There were no surviving engineers to tell the story. Let me, an engineer with thirty odd years of sea going experience tell what would have happened.

There were three propellers driving the Titanic, the outer ones were driven by four cylinder, triple expansion steam engines and the centre by a steam turbine. All were supplied with steam from 29 scotch boilers.

On April 14th 1912 at 11.30 pm engineers would have been busy completing the engine room log in preparation to handing over to the middle watch at midnight. The middle watchmen would have been aroused preparing to go on watch. All the water tight doors between the engine rooms and boiler rooms were open.

At 11.40 pm the the engine telegraphs rang to Full Astern and shortly after to stop. The immediate action by the engineers was to obey the telegraphs, finally closing the manoeuvring valves to bring the engines to stop. Before the ship came to a stop there was a grinding crash along the starboard side.

Five compartments on the starboard side for'd had been breached to varying degrees of severity. In addition to the for'd hold and baggage room, number 6 boiler room would have been the most severely damaged and flooded almost instantaneously, numbers 4 and 5 boiler rooms were less damaged. Bitterly cold sea water flowed towards the engine rooms, until first officer Murdock closed the water tight doors. There was a rush to vacate the flooding boiler rooms before the water tight doors closed as the damage could not be controlled.

All engineers would have been alerted and proceeded to the engine room. The Chief Engineer J.Bell was confronted with a disastrous situation and had to prioritise and direct the immediate action. To isolate the flooding boiler rooms both steam and water wise, maintain steam pressure in available boilers to supply power to pumps and electric generators. The chief engineer delegated many of these activities to senior engineers assisted by the junior engineers, greasers and stokers.

Water was rapidly filling damaged compartments. The fault in the design of the Titanic was now going to be revealed by the sequence of events which ultimately sink the vessel. The water tight bulkheads between each compartment did not go up to the continuous main deck of the ship as a result, as the hold filled, water overflowed into the next compartment and the sequence continued with the inevitable result.

As time passed it would have been obvious that the engineers were fighting a losing battle and could not contain the flooding, but the priority remained the same, maintain boiler pressure to keep the lights burning and give as many as possible a chance of survival.

Water had flooded number 2 and 3 boiler rooms the vessel had taken on a steep trim for'd there was only one boiler room left and gradually it started to flood , the fires would have been extinguished, only the steam which remained in those boilers could keep the generators running in the turbine engine room and it would not last long.

The engineers had been fighting for nearly two and a half hours in the most appalling conditions carrying out their duties as directed. It was now time for every man for himself. Not one man left his post there were no surviving engineers and the lights kept burning.

A collective demonstration of such courage and devotion to duty has yet to be surpassed.

Reader 4.

Postscript

In the sinking of the Titanic, there were many instances of bravery and devotion to duty displayed by officers, crew and, passengers, all of whom faced almost certain death in the frigid waters of the North Atlantic Ocean.

Some Pertinent Facts

The Titanic carried 1308 passengers and 898 officers and crew

Of the compliment of 36 engineers none survived

All of the 8 bandmen perished.

All of the 5 postal workers perished.

Only 775 people survived out of a total of 2206

There was only 16 life boats and 4 collapsible boats.

There are several memorials dedicated to those who lost their lives.

The citizens of Godalming Jack Phillips home town, erected a memorial to his honour.

The Titanic Engineers Memorial is situated at East Park Terrace Southampton.

The Titanic Memorial in Washington D.C. honours the men who gave their lives so that women and children may be saved.

There were statutory changes made to the rules for the construction and equipping of ships. The water tight bulkheads were extended to the continuous main deck to improve the water tight integrity of the ship to prevent the water from one compartment overflowing into the next. The number of life boats was increased to cater for the full compliment of passengers, officers and crew.

**Rest in peace all those brave souls
who sacrificed their lives so others may live.**